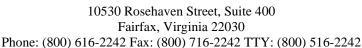
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QUALITY RATING SYSTEMS: QUESTIONS to ASK

Quality Rating Systems (QRS) are a method to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings. QRS are systemic, addressing multiple aspects of early care and education through a uniform approach that is available throughout a State. QRS are part of a State's broader quality improvement continuum and have the following five common elements: 1) standards; 2) accountability; 3) program and practitioner outreach and support; 4) financing incentives specifically linked to compliance with quality standards; and 5) parent education. The following is a sample of suggested discussion questions that can be used as a State is considering the options and issues in the development (or expansion) of a Quality Rating System.

- 1. Are the goals for implementing the Quality Rating System clearly identified?
- 2. Are all the potential stakeholders (i.e., early childhood workforce, licensing staff) at the table for the development and ownership of the system?
- 3. Are the demographics of the early care and education profession known?
- 4. Is there a strong licensing program in place?
- 5. Are the financial incentives and supports sufficient to encourage programs to participate in the ORS?
- 6. If tiered reimbursement is used as a financing incentive, can early care and education programs be paid the higher reimbursement rate without impacting the rates of private-pay parents?
- 7. Are the differences in the tiers too great? (Are the steps too big?)
- 8. If accreditation is included in the Quality Rating System, how will it be included? If yes, which accrediting programs will be honored and how will that determination be made?
- 9. Is there an infrastructure in place to facilitate and support the Quality Rating System?
- 10. Are the compliance standards for maintaining a quality level (or tier) clearly identified? How will compliance be monitored?
- 11. Are expectations for participation realistic?
- 12. Have legal implications been considered as they relate to Quality Rating Systems?
- 13. How will the system be evaluated?

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